



## AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF JEWS AND BLACKS



RABBI ARYEH SPERO  
President

Dear Congressman:

After viewing the Religious Freedom Amendment and speaking with Congressman Istook I fully endorse the Amendment's passage. As you are well aware, teachers and bureaucrats in today's schools are so fearful and confused when it comes to general statements about religion that even the most cursory and innocuous remark by a school child regarding a routine religious activity is censored. This goes beyond separation of Church and State into separation of state from common sense.

The bedrock of the American public school system is local control. If a local district chooses to allow a minute toward acknowledging God and His blessings, I should think that would fall within the age-old, classic Jewish tradition to "Acknowledge the Presence of God in our midst." This is not done to proselytize but simply acknowledge the Creator we all share.

My parents and all of their Jewish peers in the previous generation spent each morning during their public school years doing so; indeed benefiting from the classic wisdom and guidance offered, for example, by Psalms.

Those uncomfortable with the notion of God --- Jew or non-Jew --- will naturally be uncomfortable with such public acknowledgments. Should we, then, censor and ban everything in society that some person finds irritating? Instead of censorship, I would expect some elementary graciousness and generosity of spirit from those who seem bothered. Truly, they are not, in any way, jeopardized. Far more ennobling than stilling the heartfelt expression of others would be to exhibit respect and tolerance for others, as well as the ideal of live-and-let-live.

Perhaps on one occasion, somewhere in some district, a Jewish child may hear the name Jesus uttered. So what! Is Judaism so tenuous that it crumbles when simply hearing about other people's beliefs? How ironic that those who for their children espouse openness to all sorts of other ideas, become insecure in this matter. The remedy for such insecurity is not to stop believers from expressing thanks to God, nor to eradicate their freedoms. It is, rather, to overcome manufactured insecurities, strengthen the Jewish education of their own children and, once and for all, begin believing in the general innate fairness of the American people.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Aryeh Spero